

# THE LANGUAGE OF LIGHT IN CULTURE: BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND PRACTICALITY

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## ABSTRACT

*The meaning of light in Malay culture have been understood not only in the scientific and physical senses, but understood more deeply within the culture. This research includes rituals and customs which encompass the philosophy and meanings of light from the Malay interpretation and understandings in terms of culture, spirituality, physical attributes and emotion. The objective of this research is to compare the meaning of light according to the understandings, interpretation and beliefs of the two cultures, the Malays and European. This includes level of spirituality and practicality. The results of this research are mainly qualitative in nature. There are supported by structured interviews, personal observation and visual data to scrutinize the problems and questions raised in this research. The primary result from the in-depth interviews with the architects, lighting designer from Europe and religious experts have been analyzed and helped to answer the issues. The findings from this research reflect the values and essence of the Malay community and manifested in hardcopy, representing a creation of art that symbolises the meaning and spirit of the Malays. It is a cultural identity, social interaction, morality, a symbol, and the contents of culture and race. Light and lighting should also not be understood only in the normal sense of being merely a design or practicality purposes, but it needs to be appreciated and expressed through emotions, mind and body, culture belonging, belief and divinity aspects. Through its existence the appreciation of the humanity and society has been highlighted.*

**Keywords:** light culture, spirituality, religious, lighting design, belief.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Greater understanding and more extensive research on the Malay interpretations and perceptions of light and their associations with cultural, spiritual and physical attributes would draw different conclusions about the Malay identity. The researcher able to scrutinise the theoretical interest begins from the understanding of light under

philosophical, meanings and practical point of view as an important tool to pave the exploration of cultural identity. In searching the meanings, interpretation and philosophy of light, this paper explores the lighting designers' point of view and their philosophy of lighting design. The westerner and the Asian lighting designer have different and similarity approached when it comes to the meaning, philosophy and practicality. However, the differences between them have gone hand in hand and create the beauty of lighting design world, both in spirituality and practicality. The interpretation, scenario and philosophy of light and lighting between the two cultures form the core of this study. Several other aspects, such as technical and scientific aspects, are also generally discussed and explained to support and acknowledge their relevance, especially in terms of their acceptance and understanding among the Western community. Results of the discussion and analysis will be analysed globally. In general, the researcher gives a Malay point of view as Malay who is practising in a western country. The result will indeed be different from what Malay in Malaysia would understand in the context of light and lighting.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH AND FRAMEWORK**

The research and investigation are focused on the manifestation of the Malay and European culture, thus requiring a better understanding and interpretation of light from the perception and understandings both culture, including their culture and identity, by understanding these framework:

- . Rituals and customs related to light.
- . The philosophy and meanings of light from both cultures,
- . An understanding of the meaning of light in terms of:
  - a. culture
  - b. spirituality
  - c. physical attributes
  - d. emotions related to light

Above all these, for light can influence these attributes as well as the display of cultural products that are rich in these attributes. In addition to this, by studying the two cultures that are on how the European people perceive the elements of light and their understandings of light would be useful for the development of the research. The advantages of the cross-cultural method in this research are twofold. First, according to Moore (1961) it ensures that one's findings relate to human behaviour in general rather than being bound to a single culture and second it

increases the range of variation of many of the variables. Supported by Segall (1999) that study peoples in foreign or exotic lands can comprehend how they react under some circumstances. He mentioned again that by studying other cultures people will learn about themselves and will discover or rediscover that their way of thinking and behaving is not universal and hence may be less perfect (Segall, 1999). Thus, this research would adopt something new from other cultures that can improve one's own existence and render it more exciting or satisfactory (Segall, 1999).

## **2.1 The Language of Light in Culture**

The approach to the concept of culture was rather popular in philosophy and social sciences during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Bernardi, 1977). However, today this approach has been largely replaced in scientific thinking which it is regarded as a criterion for distinguishing between the activities peculiar to humans as opposed to purely biological forms of life (Bernardi, 1977). The element of light and its role in once culture has been studied intensively. Culture according to Aragonés is born from its latitude (Aragonés, 2005). This statement quoted from a renowned lighting designer, creates an association between light and culture, in which according to him, its climatic consequences result in a whole spectrum of expressions that give rise to its greater intimacy to Man and Earth (Aragonés, 2005).

This following section will also touch on the aspect of culture, focusing on spiritual and religious factors as entities of a culture, as this study focuses more on these. However, light and spirituality in Islam are the main aspects given emphasis as this philosophy and concept will form the backbone of this study. Views from the West are believed to be able to help lead to the aspect of universality that can be adopted by lighting designers into practices. It must be noted here that the researcher does not deny the importance of the aspect of lighting technology or other aspects of lighting that combine creative art skills, technical skills, empathy, imagination, problem solving, spatial awareness etc: a combination of "art", "science" and "emotional" skills which make it such a satisfying discipline. The researcher is confident that the lighting philosophy and in-depth meaning always helps as a starting point.

The lighting designers discussed in this section come from various backgrounds, each with their own philosophies in realising their designs. Generally, philosophy drives people to the other point of view or a fresh start to fresh ideas and a trigger to keep people thinking, as discussed by Plato. Also, mentioned by a lighting designer, Akari-

Lisa Ishii (2001) that no matter style, as a lighting designers they are required to understand the philosophy behind the design for instance, architectural design because this will doubtlessly lead to a solution, even though it is not pave a fix solution. As mentioned by Deutsch (1991), philosophy opens up for people new possibilities of raising questions that enrich their abilities to think creatively. The question is how does philosophy's strength in the mind and culture of a community play a role in the study of the lighting design and its application today? There is no doubt that an individual's philosophies and beliefs are complex issues to debate. However, based on the findings of this paper, philosophy is a way to generate something that is practical or a natural science based on empirical facts. The researcher sees this issue as more focused on the way of thinking of an individual or designer (Ishii, 2001).

*Light is vision, understanding, insight and enterprise.*

*Light is also reflection, originality, joy and sharing.*

*Light is pleasure, humanity, nurturing and wholeness.*

*LIGHT IS LIFE.*

The statement above is taken from a book written by Motoko Ishii that attracted the researcher's attention in this study. She is among the lighting designers from Asia who stands out with her philosophy, concept of spirituality. Apart from that, she also uses traditions as the basis of her inspiration and takes advantage of advance technologies and the newest light source. For Motoko Ishii, moonlight is the ideal, a very quiet and soft light in keeping with the precepts of Japanese Buddhism which dictates harmony and peace. The same point of view by Dugar (2006) in his article "The essence of lighting religious building" in Professional Lighting Design magazine as he mentioned that in the ultimate truth, religions have often described spiritual essence as mystical white light. Akari (2001) supported by those statements that the symbolic of light is more dramatic, exciting and memorable because the feelings it arouses are derived from something deep within light that human share in their "collective memory" something that goes beyond religion. She again mentioned that the design is an expression of what the lighting designer feels in his heart and this is what professional lighting designers do whatever the project; they put soul into the lighting design project (Akari-Lisa, 2001).

According to Italian lighting designer Tellini (2004), in designing lighting, an important aspect to focus on is the understanding and knowledge of local culture. She, who had also studied lighting and local culture, said that it is a matter of cultural identity and should be closely linked with the history and meaning of the location. An example

of the lighting and culture of a society was illustrated by Akari-Lisa Ishii (2001) in her article "Light and Shrines" taking the religions consideration mentioned that from the point of view of lighting design and urban design, religious monuments have other important roles to play in addition to being places of worshipped as a public landmark. She also added that the monuments speak of the city's past and present: history culture, convention, styles and religion (Akari-Lisa, 2001).

Tellini (2004), who was indeed interested in lighting and culture, again stated that lighting has an aesthetic of its own and this should be derived from the culture. Culture, within this context, covers aspects as mentioned by Canzler (2003), that every human activity takes place in the context of nature and culture, art and perception or in the field of tension between the community and the individual. Every culture has different meaning of light.

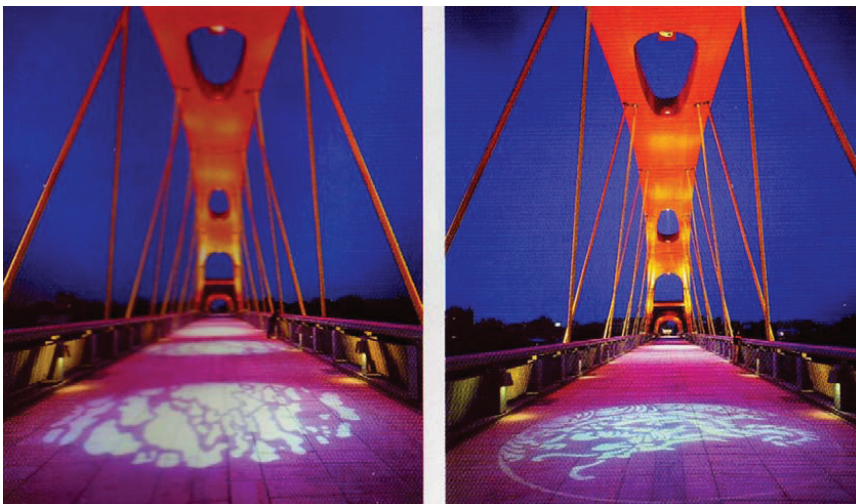
Giladi (2001) who is experience in Mediterranean daylight, who scrutinised from the angle of culture and its relationship with the technical aspect said that cultural and geographical backgrounds influence human reactions to various illumination intensities, to light, temperature and colour rendering. Turner (1998) said that one of the challenges of working with light is that an objective physical phenomenon, which can be measured with great accuracy, is in fact subject to a range of individual, social, cultural and psychological perceptions that may vary greatly from place to place and from time to time. In talking about natural or artificial light, according to Niesewand (1989), it is much more than waves of electromagnetic energy. It carries with it a lot of emotional energy, since light is an essential component of both psychological and physiological equilibriums (Niesewand, 1989).

According to Speirs & Mayor (2005), the best light for human is obviously daylight and they had accomplished with a solution with electric light that is so close to daylight conditions in the five floors below ground in the rehearsal room in the opera house in Copenhagen. Human activities are often closely linked with latitude, whereby according to Niesewand (1989), there is a distinction between the areas of sky where the sun rises and sets, so there are distinct light cultures in different parts of the world. She added that light cultures differ from country to country and that these cultures are as clearly differentiated as the rising of the sun in the east and its setting in the west.

Ishii (2001) views the aspect of lighting as covering the concepts of symbolism, internationality and universality. According to her statement, light is the beginning of space and on earth, life was born



from water and light (Ishii, 2001). The history of man's existence proves that humans used fire as a source of light in life. From this beginning, light has created civilizations and cultures (Ishii, 2001). Further, according to her, light should be taken from the standpoint of culture. And by taking this aspect into consideration, she reminds designers to put the aspect of culture as their central focus in their designs and that they should discover what lighting should be (Ishii, 2001). Her statement was agreed by Ta-Wei Lin (2005) a lighting designer from Taiwan who designed the Ben Gan Pedestrian Bridge (Figure 1). He explains that the lighting design and the concepts in the project was based on the cultural heritage which was intent to celebrate the ritual, mystical procession, with a dynamic union of colour, light and shadow with a linear space (Ta-Wei Lin, 2005). In the projects, he explains that the designers tried to combine four different elements: a dragon, a phoenix, bamboo and clouds by using projectors to create a familiar four-character blessing in Chinese culture.



(Cited in ELDA+ Light Focus 2005)

**Figure 1:** Ben Gan Pedestrian Bridge shows strong concepts depicts from Chinese culture

On perception, according to Davidoff (1975), any individual who has encountered different experiences would have different perceptions. Among the several statements made by Gregory (1973) on the brightness of light is that brightness is an experience. This sensation is roughly related to the intensity of the light entering the eyes and that light itself is not coloured, but gives rise to sensations of brightness and colour (Gregory, 1973). For example, to the Europeans, according to Clair (2003), a dimly lit room will be perceived as comfortable

because the warm, orange light reminds one of candles. Another example, related to the colour of light and physiological to human in association with a sunset and warm fire according to Kramer (2006) are closed related which human can feel by a warm light colour. However, under excessively dim white lighting, the same room will give rise to a feeling of unease, comparable to how people feel under an overcast sky in broad daylight (Clair, 2003). On the other hand, according to Clair, if it is too brightly lit, it will feel less comfortable under the 'warm' orange light than under the 'cold' white light. This is all to do with the physiology of the eye. However, Akari-Lisa Ishii (2001) has been researching at the usage of the candles in once religion. According to her, candles are frequently use in many religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism, Judism, and Hinduism. However, each application is specific and characteristic and sometimes they differ greatly from each other; influenced by and effecting an influence on, their background and historical cultures (Akari-Lisa, 2001). These statements are supported by Basler (2006), mentioning that in the relic of many ancient civilations evidence can be found of the human fascination with light. She furthers that light has always been worshipped as an appearance of the Divine and the celestial light-giving bodies were often equated with divine persona who exerted direct influence over everyday life (Basler, 2006).

Louis Clair (2003), the experts in lighting design in Europe and Asia have issued a statement that we have to remember that colour contrasts are not perceived in the same way by everyone and the colour sensitivity of the eye is not the same for all of us, because people in different parts of the world are known to have different degrees of sensitivity to certain wavelengths. Therefore, the usage of light is different in Europe that it is in Asia, based on the explanation above. This is again supported by Niesewand (1989) by her statement that although there are at least 15 colour temperatures of fluorescent light, this source tends to be cool, while incandescent is warm. In other words, cool and warm lights are geographical distinctions in nature's colouring book which in further south on the globe, the light warms up with the angle of the sun.

### **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 A Comparison between Spirituality and Practicality**

To study the beliefs and faith in animism, Hinduism and Buddhism, which still dominate the Malay community, the researcher gathered views from religious scholars in Malaysia. In Malaysia, the Malays are Muslims who are guided in their daily lives by one faith and unity

in God. Therefore, seven Muftis (religious advisors) were consulted through closed interviews conducted via mail. Their explanations were generally guided by Islamic religious laws and the Quran as well as Hadith.

In an interview with Abd Wahid which has been made in 2005, the Mufti of the state of Selangor in Malaysia, he explained that Islam only allows customs to be practised provided it does not go against Islamic teachings, whether in terms of belief, behaviour or law. This is supported by Saad, the Mufti of the state of Penang, who explained that Muslims must be aware and sensitive enough to find out if a custom is influenced by the belief or faith of another religion before making it a practice. Meanwhile, according to Zakaria, the Mufti of Malaysia's state of Perak, who touched on the element of light in beliefs, light and fire are sacred elements in Hinduism. He and Awang, the Mufti of Terengganu, Malaysia, share the same opinion in saying that it is this element of light that has permeated into a part of the Malay culture. This is seen, for example, in the lighting of oil lamps during festive celebrations. In fact, it is not encouraged to adopt these concepts to such an extreme that the practice resembles or copies the Hindu culture. Nevertheless, the practice is not wrongful as long as the Malay Muslim community does not glorify the Hindu community's concept of culture, as explained by Abd Wahid, whereby a custom or culture adopted from the custom or culture of another race that is not against Islamic beliefs, behaviour and law, may be practised, provided the Malays adhere to the guidelines of Islam.

The Mufti of Malacca, Mohd Saleh, who used the Al-Quran as his main reference, said that in it, much is mentioned on light. According to him, light or "*nur*" in Arabic, is interpreted into three meanings, which are:

- a) Light itself as illuminator
- b) Light as guidance
- c) The Quran as a guiding light

The basic meaning of light (*nur*) is guidance, because "*nur*", within its definitions as illuminator, guidance or the Quran, functions for those who have gone astray or are in search of the truth. Mohd Saleh also said that Surah Ibrahim (verse 1) states that the Quran was sent down to mankind to lead them out of the depths of darkness and into the brightness of light by the grace of God the Almighty and Worthy of All Praise. He explained based on the above verse that the Quran is a guide for all mankind on how to lead their lives on earth. It is not only a source of knowledge, but also tells about doomsday and the hereafter.



The fact is that in Islam, light (nur) refers only to Allah s.w.t, and when light refers to anything else other than Him, it is only a metaphor. He further added that light (nur) has two meanings in Islam:

**a) *Understanding by the public at large***

Light (nur) is understood by the general public as something that is seen, but its visibility is relative. In other words, something that is clearly visible to a person can sometimes be hidden from others. Light describes something that can be seen or that causes other things to be seen.

**b) *Understanding by exclusive groups***

Light (nur) is understood by exclusive groups as “the soul that sees”. The secret of light is its visibility as a means of observation. But observation also depends on the ability to see. Although light is described as something that is seen and allows something to be seen, there is not a single light that can be seen or that enables something to be seen by the blind. Hence in Islam, “the soul that sees”, or the spirit, is similar to visible light in its position as an element that must be present for an observation to occur. In fact, based on this definition, Mohd Saleh said that “the soul (spirit) that sees” is in a higher position as it possesses the ability to observe and only with it can observation exist. He also explained that from the Islamic perspective, light (nur) usually refers to the revelation or guidance of Allah. Saad agrees to the explanation by the two Muftis above, even though he sees light as a positive element in life, saying that light must be considered as a guidance that inspires one to face all challenges with patience.

Also from the Islamic perspective, the philosophy and meaning of light are understood as the light of truth. Zakaria explained that when seen from two different dimensions, light creates two different perceptions. The first dimension is light that can be seen or detected by the senses, such as light from a lamp that can be used by man without any restrictions of law. The beauty of light and its uniqueness once again prove that its Creator is Glorious and the Most Powerful. It is seen as something unique made only by Him with much care.

When seen from the dimension of guidance to the truth, or the light of truth, light is a gift from the Almighty Creator of the Universe as the original source. Whenever the word ‘light’ is mentioned, he said, it indirectly portrays a positive element that leads to the belief in the unity of God the Creator. Mohd Saleh explained that there is no statement that refers to light as negative or bad. This means that light only symbolises goodness and beauty. This understanding of light must be taken as a

guidance affecting an individual's soul and behaviour, and not viewed only as the light of truth without any action of goodness.

Light also means religion. Saad explained this as "light is the torch of life", or a life that always depends on guidance, where without guidance, man will face darkness, misguidance and ignorance. Furthermore, he explained that light that means religion will provide direction and shape a person's character, and their morals would always be based on religion. Light that is associated with religion in terms of guidance and revelation, he added, is not wrong in Islam. It is only prohibited in Islam if it becomes a belief or an object of worship. He stressed that in Islam, tangible light, such as light from the sun, moon, stars, lamps, etc. are creations by then on man, and can only bring benefit. Moreover, he said, it is only a medium created for man's convenience, such as sunshine as a source of life, fire to burn with, light from the lamp to illuminate the night, and so forth. Meanwhile, Mohd Saleh views light as an element that should be used as a symbol, sign or theme, besides cultural elements or customs, which do not go beyond religious boundaries. He said that using light as a form of belief trespasses beyond the boundaries of Islamic belief and contravenes Islamic laws lest the One and Only is said to have associates. He cited an example that the culture or custom of lighting oil lamps around the house to light up the path or beautify a festive night is accepted and may be practised. This is agreed by Abd. Wahid, whose philosophy and understanding of light in the daily lives of the Malays leans more towards a symbolic definition only, to merely indicate glory and merriment. What is required and recommended in Islam is to liven up the night with worship to Allah. This is the concept, meaning and philosophy of light in Islam.

This awareness and knowledge must be cultivated so that the lives of the Malay Muslims are guided by the light of faith and unity of the Creator. The Malay Muslim community should understand and refer to 'light' (nur) as how it is often used in slogans like "light is the torch of life", etc., as a revelation and guidance by the One and Only that should be implemented positively. The revelation of the One and Only refers to the truth.

This differs from the belief of Catholics who regard light as an important element in celebrations, with religious connotations. In an interview with Professor Calles, a professor of theology, church law, history and morals from the Church of Saint Nicolas in Eupen, Belgium, he explained light from the aspect of Divinity according to Catholic teachings. His first statement on light is that it is the first gift from God to man on this earth. Light is seen as an important indication

of the existence of God, where he explained that:

*"The first thing God did was to create light. He created light because he wanted to ban darkness. This is why light in the Christian Church has powerful meanings when you speak of God... In God is only light, there is no darkness according to Saint John 1st Chapter King James: subchapter 5: 114."*

He gave examples of the importance of light, including the beliefs on light, in ritual ceremonies among Catholics, such as during Easter. He said:

*"The Easter candle is lit on the night before Easter. We do it in the Holy procession at the beginning when we walk into the church. On the door, first the fire with which the Easter candle will be lit is blessed, and when the Easter candle is lit, we walk with the candles towards the altar but we stop three times on the way and each time we stop, we raise the candle in the air and call out Jesus the light. Easter is the holiday where we celebrate Jesus' resurrection. And that means Jesus defeated the darkness with light. Light means life, and we walk towards the altar and place the Easter candle on the right side of the altar, where it stands all year long."*

Candles would be lit during Easter, he explained, at every prayer between Easter and "the Ascension Day of Christ". In addition, candles are lit at funerals as a sign of life. In a christening ceremony of a newborn baby, the lighting of a candle is seen as the beginning of the baby's life in his future search of perfection and goodness. Prof. Calles explained that:

*"Life is stronger than death, light is stronger than darkness. The Easter candle also stands near the christening place (Baptism christening bowl with Holy water). At every christening, a "christening candle" is lit by the Easter candle. The christening candle is given to the parents with the words, "receive the light". This means that the child will be enlightened throughout his life or will face a good life. That's the meaning of the Easter candle to us."*

He also explained further, in great detail, the use of candlelight in rituals, such as prayer time, on the Ascension Day of Mary and during special celebrations for Saints:

*"The red light above the altar represents the eternal light/flame and the presence of Jesus Christ. Beneath this light is a little shrine. In the shrine is a piece of bread that represents the body of Jesus. This light burns all year round except on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter). The light is blown out and the door of the shrine is opened to symbolise the death of Jesus. This*

*light is lit again on the night of Easter and this symbolises the presence of Jesus and his holiness in the church. On the altar you will also find two big candles that are lit during prayer, also symbolising the Easter light and the presence of Jesus. On the side is the May altar. This altar is for mother Mary of God and there are two candles that are lit for the special celebration of 'the Ascension Day of Mary'. On the opposite side of the May altar is the altar for other Saints and its candles will be lit during special celebrations for certain Saints. The light has several meanings - the light stands for eternal life/never ending. We say they stand in the light on the other side where they are not confronted with death."*

There is no doubt that there is a difference between Muslims and Catholics, especially on beliefs. Muslims, as earlier explained by muftis, need to be clear on the meaning and use of light in their lives so as not to be in conflict with Islamic laws. In Islam, light is a physical element that is no more than a benefit to man, explained Saad, the Mufti of Penang in his statement earlier. It is forbidden in Islam only if it becomes a belief or an object of worship. This is different from Catholic teachings, where light is a very important ritualistic element to its followers. Prof. Calles gave this example:

*"At the entrance of the church you find a little chapel with lots of candles. In this chapel, people come and they light the candle for someone to wish them luck, good health etc. The light in the little chapel represents public belief but the light on the main altar stands for the "liturgy" of the church. The reason people do that is to call upon the big candle (the eternal flame) for help, to guide them into the light and onto the right way in their times of need."*

We can see here that the lighting of candles during devotion and prayer has a specific significance and belief. They believe that it is the work of God to keep this light alive for humanity. It forms part of the hidden structure of the world. Just as in Islam, Catholics also have the same understanding, where through the hearts of His servants, the light guides those who need, provides invisible love and support, as well as the possibility for real change, not only to the individual but also to humanity as a whole. His statement regarding "(the eternal flame) to guide them into the light and onto the right way in their times of need" is the similarity that the researcher observes, between Islam and Catholicism, where the "light" is understood as a guidance and message directed towards The Creator in seeking the true path of life on earth. However, it must be stressed once again here that the meaning and interpretation of the statement should be clear among Muslims, as explained earlier by religious scholars on the guidelines.

Almost all Catholic churches identified by the researcher do not use electrical lamps as its main source of lighting. The Catholic churches that the researcher visited in Germany and Europe mostly used candlelight and natural light. Even so, the researcher observes that in Catholic churches, electric light is used only to brighten up the room, but it does not have any symbolic meaning. The question was explained by Prof. Calles, where according to him, the situation has a specific significance. He said:

*"The reason you don't find a lot of electric lighting in a Catholic Church is that the candles have a symbolic meaning. Candles burn down and melt. It stands for the Love to be selfless and devoted. It is the "soul of the light" to brighten up our lives. Even the eternal flame is an oil lamp. Its consumption stands for the giving of its soul. This is the meaning. Here we use real light from a candle or oil lamp because it is symbolic. Electric lamps take out some of this symbolism, and the symbolic meaning will be lost."*

The researcher identified a similarity between Islam and Catholicism, where "light" is understood as a spiritual element, as it is understood in most other religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism that it is a force from God and a proof of God's existence. Therefore, the researcher also assumes that light in Catholicism is a medium between man and his Creator. On the statement, "the soul that sees", Prof. Calles explained his point of view, based on the Bible as a guide, that:

*"The soul is part of the light and it doesn't have its own power source, and God is Light, not darkness. Our souls have been powered by God's Light. Without God, there will only be darkness because natural light (sunlight or artificial light) are not God's lights. God's light is a Power. So the soul has been powered by God's light. The bible says that we are reflections of God's light. So, the light in our soul is reflected by God's light."*

Meanwhile, an interview with Rosèn, a Jewish religious teacher from Düsseldorf, gave an added view and input that helped the researcher understand the element of light in religion. She first explained the history of Judaism before explaining the use of candles in Jewish rituals. These religions naturally share some similarities. According to her:

*"These are essentially the basic similarities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They are very much the same, yet they are very much different."*

However, the researcher will not analyse or argue about the differences and similarities in faith between these religions. The researcher asked Rosèn about the function and meaning of the use of seven candles in Jews rituals. Rosèn explained that:

*"The candles, we call it the Menorah, are very important and have a deep meaning in our religion. Of the seven candles, the middle one, normally red, represents the eternal flame, and it symbolises God. The seven candles symbolise the seven days of Creation. The candle in the middle cannot be extinguished and this is different from the teachings of Christianity. You cannot blow out the red candle! It reflects God and you have to show respect to God."*

The flame also has a special symbolic meaning to Jews. Rosèn explained that:

*"In Judaism, the holiday Hanukah is the 'Festival of Lights', and a candle is lit for each of the eight nights. The flame represents the life and death of the person listed on the board, beside the altar in the synagogue."*

The explanations given by religious scholars discussed in this section are given to provide an understanding of the meaning and philosophy of light in religion, which is the continuation of this research.

Based on the findings gathered from the interviews, the researcher concludes that light should be regarded as the most universal and fundamental of symbols. It plays an important role in symbolising the spiritual and the divine; it is also a form of illumination from the physical and intelligence aspects. Nevertheless, the researcher is able to see the unique differences between the West and the East at two different levels of the mind. In any belief and religion, light is the source of goodness and the ultimate reality. Light is knowledge, originality, purity and morality. The masculine principle of evolution is symbolised through light. Cosmic energy, creative force and optimism all are related to light. As explained by Prof. Calles and Rosèn, the candle and its light are important symbols and they have a large number of symbolic meanings.

Light is seen by Christians and Hebrews as a symbol of Divinity, religious zeal and martyrdom. It is also seen as the symbol of wisdom and knowledge. In Islam, light has its own meaning. Firstly, it is only a benefit to man and he is forbidden to use it as an object of worship. Secondly, light is understood as a philosophy of life and its meaning is elevated based on the Quran as a guide to its followers. The researcher would firstly like to explain in this section, that whatever the concept and faith about light in whatever religion, through it we are certain to recognise His signs, and the hidden becomes manifest and known. An important point to note is that it is not the objective of the researcher to compare different religions in this study on light and lighting. Instead,



the researcher presents it such that readers can understand light as an element of respect between one another.

Light in fundamental sciences has been used and adopted by all mankind on earth. Its technology keeps changing. But the term 'light' and its deeper meaning within the faith and belief of a community are still lacking our attention. The metaphor given by a religious scholar, that light is "the soul that sees", indicates that light is universal and a natural human instinct within us. The meaning of this statement does not in any way intend to connect these findings to religion, nor to find out which religious belief is the truth. This is because the researcher believes that in any religion, human beings can establish that the soul exists and can be sensed and felt. This is seen as a standard for man. In other words, as a universal meaning, light here can be concluded as a symbol of illumination in the darkness of life, especially the individual life, a practical function in life and the symbol of holy illumination of a human being's spirit of truth.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Nevertheless, the researcher is able to see the unique differences between the West and the East at two different levels of the mind. The aspect of lighting is seen in Europe today as being more functional than divine or spiritual. We can see for ourselves that presently, our culture is obsessed with its patterns of power, with its domination over the natural world and its progress in science. The belief and faith of westerners early in the 20th century also prove that science has given us the illusion of control over the physical world. In this era, the question and conflict on religion and divinity were hotly debated. With only the application of physical functions in this study, in the researcher's opinion, we have not realised that the essential part is missing, that the colours have faded away and our life has become a blur of activity without joy or meaning. In other words, we celebrate ourselves for our own satisfaction and not our Creator in the spiritual sense. Therefore, we have to establish a bridge of understanding between these two planes of mind and consciousness. Only then are we able to work and live together and learn from one another.

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